

Chamber Board Endorses City of Springfield Question 1 on November 5 Ballot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Contact: Tiffany Batdorf, Vice President of Communications & Community Outreach
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
October 22, 2024*

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted on Monday, October 21, to endorse Question 1 as proposed by the City of Springfield on the November ballot. This proposal will ask voters to consider a quarter-cent sales tax—approximately \$15 million annually—towards public safety, including competitive pay and benefits for police and fire personnel. The remaining funds, generated by a half-cent portion, are earmarked for capital improvements, parks, and community initiatives identified in the Forward SGF comprehensive plan. The ¼-cent tax will have no sunset and the ½-cent tax sunsets in 10 years.

A ¾-cent sales tax exists currently to solely fund the Police-Fire Pension Fund. This tax was established in 2009 and has been renewed twice, supported by the Chamber each time. This system has been closed to new additions since 2006.

With the Chamber’s long-standing commitment to supporting public safety, community improvements and visionary planning for our city and region, this proposal is a crucial step to further fund police and fire salaries, meet the obligatory needs of the Police-Fire pension, and bring transformative Forward SGF projects to fruition.

“The Chamber has always supported robust investments in our public safety personnel and ensuring pension promises are kept for our police and firefighters, including endorsement of the original pension sales tax and two endorsements of the pension tax renewal,” said Matt Morrow, president of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. “This tax proposal not only continues this obligation, but it is also an opportunity to secure a consistent funding stream that will help keep citizens safe and drive long-term economic growth.”

The Chamber’s Local Issues Task Force, composed of business and community leaders from across the region with a diverse array of perspectives, played a key role in the initial review of the ballot proposal. The task force identified significant value in the quarter-cent portion of the tax for public safety and encouraged opportunities for additional project specificity regarding what approximately \$30 million in annual half-cent revenue will fund moving forward.

“We are incredibly grateful for the work of the dedicated individuals on the task force, as this proposal introduces the opportunity to transform our community and region, while supporting our crucial police and fire personnel,” said Brian Hammons, chairman of the Springfield Chamber board and president of Hammons Black Walnuts. “While we believe this proposal would benefit from even clearer accountability measures, it aligns with the Chamber’s vision for a thriving, forward-looking Springfield, and we hope voters will show tremendous support on November 5.”

If voters approve the tax, the Chamber calls on city leadership to ensure that a diverse and experienced citizens’ task force, with representatives from the business community, is quickly established to begin reviewing and identifying potential Forward SGF project funding. This task force process should allow for

adequate time to thoroughly review projects and remain transparent and accountable to taxpayers. The city should also ensure there is a robust and accurate tracking system of all revenue and project allocations, while also considering the opportunity to identify longer-range project investment amounts.

For more information about the Chamber's position on Question 1, please visit springfieldchamber.com/votereducation or contact tiffany@springfieldchamber.com.

Chamber President, Matt Morrow and Chamber Board Chairman, Brian Hammons will be available for comment, Tuesday, Oct. 22 from 10:30 – 11:00 a.m. CST. To schedule an interview time, please contact Tiffany Batdorf at 405-816-8012 or tiffany@springfieldchamber.com prior to 10:30 a.m.

###

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce is a catalyst for positive change, uniting businesses and community partners to create a vibrant and prosperous Southwest Missouri. With a legacy dating back to 1919, we champion economic development, workforce solutions and a business-friendly environment that benefits everyone.